

Winter Tree Care Reminders

As it is important for humans to prepare for winter, it is also important to prepare your trees for cold weather. As temperatures drop, roots can't get the necessary moisture, oxygen, and nutrients needed to survive year after year without proper care.

Because trees go dormant during the winter, we often forget how important it is to continue watering them when the temperatures begin to cool down. Although the trees aren't producing leaves during the winter, the roots continue to grow as long as the ground is not frozen. Lack of proper care isn't realized until several years down the road, when stressors take their toll, and the tree dies.

Proper care includes:

- Fall fertilization.
- Adequate amounts of water up and until the ground freezes.
- Adequate amounts of mulch.

Protect Your Trees from Ice Melters!

Almost all ice melting substances are technically salts. Salts can damage plants in two ways: 1) as an airborne mist affecting foliage, buds, and stems, or 2) by entering the soil. Either type of contamination can cause slow growth, deformities, and susceptibility to diseases, or death of plants.

Plants growing in areas which are subject to exposure to deicing chemicals, especially common salt (NaCl), should be protected by using these preventative measures:

- Remove ice by mechanical means if practical.
- Create drainage channels or barriers around plants where deicers are used.
- Use only the amount of ice melting chemical needed to do the job. Practice moderation.
- Use dark colored abrasives as an alternate or supplement to chemicals (sand, cinders, wood ash, etc.).
- Use calcium chloride (CaCl_2) rather than sodium chloride (NaCl) when fertilizers are not practical.
- Apply gypsum if sodium chloride contamination is anticipated.
- Be especially careful in applying salts in late winter or early spring when the ground is not frozen.